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ABSTRACT

This paper recognizes an increasing demand for counseling services for children and adults affected by divorce and notes that counselors traditionally have not been trained to provide such services. It presents a six-unit training outline which can be used as a course or as an inservice workshop for training mental health workers in offering services to persons affected by divorce. The first unit, "Review and Trends in the Literature," examines pre-1970 and post-1970 literature as two distinct periods in reported research concerning divorce impact on children. Unit 2, "Models of Intervention," presents the model developed by Wallerstein and Kelly, the Grief Model, the Rebuilding Model, and a Multimodal Therapy Model. Unit 3, "Working with Children," lists instruments useful for informational or research purposes and describes activities in the areas of emotions, cognition, problem-solving, and school-related problems. Unit 4, "Working with Parents," identifies five areas of intervention for working with single parents. Unit 5, "Working with Step-Families," addresses problems associated with remarriage. The final unit, "Child Custody Law and Mediation," examines the legal problems of divorce. Content materials and references for each of the six units are described. (NB)

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Training Counselors in Divorce Intervention:

A Course Approach

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Running Head: Divorce Intervention Training

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Abstract

With the increase in the divorce rate there is an increasing demand for counseling services for children and adults affected by divorce. Counselors traditionally have not been trained to provide such service. This article presents a model of a training program covering six major units: 1) review and trends in the literature; 2) models of intervention; 3) working with children; 4) working with parents; 5) working with step-families, and 6) child custody law and mediation. Content materials and references for each of the six units are described to facilitate development of a training program which will prepare counselors for intervention with marital divorce.

Training Counselors in Divorce Intervention:

A Course Approach

Sarah, age 13, is living with her mother. Next month, she will have the lead role in a play performed by her school Drama Club. She would like to invite her father, living in a nearby town, to the performance. Upon discussing the matter with her mother, she is informed that if the father is invited, the mother will not attend. Her mother is very upset about the whole idea, commenting on Sarah's inconsiderate thought of inviting the person who "deserted them."

John, age seven, a second grader was, until recently, one of the best students in his class. Suddenly sharp changes have occurred in his school behavior. He frequently comes unprepared to school and in class he is daydreaming most of the time. Sometimes he fails to return to class after recess and spends the time sitting under a big tree in the school yard looking into space. When all the children are in the school yard, he is often seen retreating to a corner, spending his time alone.

May, age three, was completely toilet trained and slept through the night alone in her room. She was eager to go to the day care center every morning, was generally in a very good disposition and occupied herself playing and creating. Lately, she is wetting her bed during the night. She frequently joins mom in bed during the night because she is afraid. In the morning she refuses to go to the day care center and does not let her mother leave her, even for a short period, without throwing a big tantrum.

These are some examples of reactions children are having to divorce. The rate of divorce has reached proportions whereby more and more children are affected by it. The United States divorce rate has passed through several phases. Before 1940 it was about two per 1,000 population. It increased to more than five per 1,000 population in 1980 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1981).

The number of children affected by divorce climbed from 361,000 in 1965, to 1,117,000 in 1976, and to 1,181,000 in 1979 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1981). These children typically live with their mothers who become the custodial parents in ninety percent of the cases (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1983b). According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census Reports of Population Characteristics (1983a, 1983b), 13.7 million children are living in one-parent homes.

Although most of these children are of school age, counselors are not trained in divorce intervention. This is not part of the counselor curriculum. It is the purpose of this article to offer a training outline which can be used as a course or as an in-service workshop for training mental health workers in offering services to this population. The training will include the following units:

1. Review and trends in the literature
2. Models of intervention
3. Working with children
4. Working with parents
5. Working with step-families

6. Child custody law and mediation.

Review of the Literature and Trends

In this section two distinct periods in reported research concerning divorce impact on children are explored: 1) pre 1970 research that tended to conceptualize divorce as an event with permanent consequences, and 2) post 1970 research which tended to focus on divorce as a process affecting children differently at various developmental stages.

Pre 1970 research begins with Bowlby's (1944) study of 44 juvenile thieves. He noted children from "broken homes" were found in greater frequency in this group than children referred to the same clinic for other reasons. This was the beginning of over two decades of research looking at the association between mental illness and pathology caused by parental loss in childhood (Munro, 1965). Some of the areas reviewed are impact of divorce on psychiatric referrals (Banister & Rabden, 1944, 1945; Tuckman & Regan, 1966; Kalter, 1977), delinquency (Gregory, 1965), suicide (Bruhn, 1962; Greer, 1964), emotional and identity impact (Kock, 1961; Gardner, 1956; Caplan & Douglas, 1969), depression (Beck, Sethi, & Tuthill, 1963) and school related behavior (Kelly, North, & Zingle, 1965; Gregory, 1965).

Post 1970 research is considering divorce as a process which can be overcome by appropriate education and interventions (Hetherington, 1979; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Special emphasis is placed on the conclusion that children at different ages have different reactions to divorce (Cantor, 1979; Derek, 1974; Klatskin, 1972; Rorhlich, Ranier, Berg-Cross, & Berg-Cross, 1977; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1980). Additional areas

emphasized are the child's developmental ability to work and play (Hess & Camera, 1979), self-concept (Parish & Dostal, 1980), emotional impact (Kalter & Rembar, 1981), and adjustment (Tessman, 1978; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). This literature review section intended to provide the trainer with an understanding of the chronological development of research in the area of family dissolution.

Models of Intervention

Looking at divorce adjustment as a process, there are several models of intervention available to work with groups and individuals. Four of these models are presented to workshop participants. They include the model developed by Wallerstein and Kelly (1974, 1975, 1976, 1980) which looks at reactions of children to divorce in four categories across four age groups, the Grief Model developed by the Bristol, England Divorce Project (Murch, 1973), the Rebuilding Model based on work by Bruce Fisher (1978, 1981), and a Multi-modal Therapy Model (Lazarus, 1976) modified by Donald Keat II (1979).

Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) look at the reactions of children to divorce by dividing them into four groups: preschoolers (2½ years to 6 years), early latency children (7 to 8 years), later latency children (9 to 12 years), and adolescents (13 to 18 years). They then explore the reactions of these different groups in the areas of cognition or perceptions about what has happened, feelings that they have about the situation and the individuals involved, how to make decisions about different situations in which they find

themselves, and school related problems. By identifying the developmental age of a child, counselors can be more aware of areas of potential conflict and more effectively plan intervention strategies.

The Grief Model (Murch, 1973) describes the stages of grief with which an individual copes and through which he or she progresses as he or she deals with the loss of a spouse or significant individual. The five stages are 1) Denial of the reality of what is happening; 2) Depression, a sadness and grief that are felt along with hopelessness and confusion; 3) Anger at everything and everybody; 4) Bargaining out of the desperation, anger, or denial to restore the family structure, and 5) Acceptance of the situation with forward movement. In addition, there are several areas of loss to grieve. They include the legal, economic, social, familial, physical, parental, companion, sexual, and emotional domains. Locating the areas in which individuals are having difficulty can help therapy or interventions be more effective.

The Rebuilding Model (Fisher, 1981) theorizes that, through the breakup of a relationship, individuals can grow positively to form better and healthier relationships. To do this they must work through and come to terms with certain feelings, ideas, and situations. Fisher calls this process rebuilding, and the areas within which individuals work are called building blocks. These building blocks include Denial, Loneliness, Guilt vs. Rejection, Grief, Anger, Letting go of certain emotions, Self-Concept, Friendships, Leftovers from old relationships, Loving Oneself, Trust, Sexuality, Responsibility, Singleness, and Freedom. Fisher has also

developed a divorce adjustment scale which can be used to help determine those areas in which individuals need the most growth.

The Multi-modal Therapy Model (Lazarus, 1976) investigates seven interactive modalities to help determine where intervention is necessary. The modalities are interactive which means that change in one modality will affect other modalities. Keat (1979) identified these seven modalities as BASIC ID which is an acronym for Behavior, Affect, Sensation, Imagery, Cognition, Interpersonal Relations, and Drugs. Modifying this for use with children, the HELPING acronym seemed more appropriate. These areas include Health, Emotions -feelings, Learning - school, People - personal relationships, Imagination -interests, Need to know - think, and Guidance of A, B, C's. By obtaining information in these areas, intervention strategies can be determined and implemented.

This section is designed to give participants different methods with which to approach evaluation of areas of stress and plan strategies for intervention which could be beneficial to clients.

Working With Children

Because more children than ever before are being affected by divorce, this section is designed to address the issues with which these children are coping.

Children whose parents are divorced encounter unique problems (Cantor, 1977; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1976; 1980) to which they react differently at different ages (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1976, 1980). Although community agencies are available to work with these children, the school is

the most convenient site to work with them (Cantor, 1977) and small groups seem to be a preferred mode for many children (Cantor, 1977; Hammond, 1979). Exploration of feelings and problems encountered by children of divorce have been investigated through groups utilizing such approaches as discussion, plays, puppets, and filmstrips (Cantor, 1977; Green, 1978; Wilkinson & Bleck, 1979).

The following instruments may be useful for informational or research purposes: the Walker Problem Identification Checklist (WPBIC) (Walker, 1962), The Child Behavior Rating Scale (CBRS) (Cassel, 1970), the Children's Attitude Toward Parental Separation Inventory (CAPSI) (Berg, 1979), and The Adolescent Questionnaire on Reactions to Parental Divorce (Reinhard, 1977). Informal assessment procedures such as pictures, transparencies, supper-time drawing (Leubuscher, 1972), stick-man procedure (Leaman, 1972) and stories (Despert & Potter, 1936; Anderson & Anderson, 1951) are introduced.

Wallerstein and Kelly (1976; 1980) have identified four areas of conflict which are addressed in this section: emotions and/or feelings, cognitions, problem solving, and school related problems.

Several activities are presented which involve work in the emotional area. A get-acquainted activity using caterpillar segments to talk about areas of themselves is used. The I Am Loveable and Capable (IALAC) filmstrip is shown and discussed (Simon, 1973) as well as a film entitled Family Matters (Agency for Instructional Television) which deals with some divorce dilemmas and issues. The NICE-O game, similar to Bingo but using

feeling words, is described and demonstrated. Other activities include discussions of signs of stress in children of which to be aware, different ways to compliment and encourage children, as well as activities to indicate various feelings related to different incidents.

The cognitive area is explored through the identification of questions children have about the divorce process and divorce itself. A visit to a courtroom with a judge present to respond to the questions is one way to facilitate exploration in this area. Books are also introduced and used which can help children explore and search for answers.

Problem solving skills are dealt with through problem situations created by the children. A decision making chart is used to go through the process of making the decision as well as follow-up on the decision. There is a modification of the paradigm designed by Russell and Thoresen (1976). A treasure hunt activity is also used to develop these skills.

School related problems are explored through the presentation of situations in the areas of achievement, social skills, study habits, and absenteeism. Brainstorming and role-playing are conducted to explore issues and interventions with children who are withdrawn, acting out, and depressed.

This section is designed to respond to those needs of children as identified in the literature and to present possible interventions which can be used by school personnel, both counselors and teachers.

Working with Parents

The breakdown of the two parent family forces the parent with custody of the children to adopt a family style that will enable him or her to continue functioning within the family unit. Mendes (1979) presented a typology of five single-parent family life-styles which seem to cover most single parent families. This typology of single-parent family life-styles is the beginning of the unit concerning interventions with parents. Before intervening with the family, it is important to understand the dynamics within the family so that the intervention is specific to the particular situation.

Single parents request many types of help. Some of the concerns of all single parents surround the topic of child development, child rearing methods, community agencies offering support and aid, and dating, remarriage and legal ramifications. Then the specific needs of female and male single parents are explored separately. Female single parents are most concerned with loss of emotional support, loss of identity, finances, being assertive, vocational counseling, minor repairs in the home, and car and yard work. The single custodial father often expresses feelings of loneliness, social isolation, concern over dating, lack of house management, and child care skills.

Next, the roles parents play are explored. Parents tend to establish a stereotypic type of behavior in relating to their children. These roles extend all the way from the "army officer" where the parent gives orders and expects the child to obey, to the parent who assumes the role of the "supportive counselor" who listens to the children's needs, and develops responsibility and independence in their children.

The major part of this unit is concerned with interventions and strategies in working with single parents. Five areas of intervention have been identified:

- a) Help for the parent. The emphasis here is on dissemination of information: Community agencies, books and other reading material, seminars and existing groups within the community, and factors which minimize the impact of divorce on children.
- b) How to help the child emotionally. Since parents try to spare children from talking about the divorce we try to explore the reasons for this phenomenon. It appears that not knowing how to initiate or talk about the subject is the major reason for the avoidance. The use of books, filmstrips, AV materials, dolls, painting and games are facilitative devices to interact with children. Guilt, anxiety, shame and anger are some of the emotions explored in this section.
- c) How and what to explain to the child. Among clinicians (Gardner, 1970; Grollman, 1975) the message is clear: tell the children about the divorce. The idea is to make sure that the children understand what is happening and that no unrealistic expectations be developed. Future living arrangements, visitations, legal concerns and how the divorce will affect the children's daily lives should be explained.
- d) Simple therapeutic and intervention strategies the parents can use. One of the most important elements is to maintain as much

as possible, the same routine activities as before the divorce. Attending to the child's feelings is another important element in which parents need to develop skills. In addition, children should not assume too many adult responsibilities such as cleaning the house and babysitting. Finally, parents request help in dealing with their children's attempts to reunite them with their former spouses.

- e) How to deal with dating and remarriage. Dating is threatening to children because it destroys the hope that their parents are going to get together again. Therefore, it is important to explain to the children that you cared for the absent parent, but now that she or he is not around, you feel the need to associate with people your own age. Regular routine with the children should be maintained and the relationship with the non-custodial parent should not be threatened. Sexual relationships and remarriage are two additional areas explored in this unit.

This unit is concluded with outlines of group interventions and case analyses. Three specific outlines including activities are presented: one for custodial mothers, one for custodial fathers and one for non-custodial parents. The cases presented to the parents deal with depression, attention span and concentration, awareness of the environment and reduction in intellectual ability.

Working With Step-Families

This unit begins with a short presentation of demographic data. The number of step-families are on the increase in our society. Glick (1980) reports that by 1977, 41% of marriages involved a previously married partner. This is alarming since remarried families are considered high risk family units. Forty-four percent of remarriages are dissolved (Glick & Norton, 1977).

The obstacles faced by a remarried family are illustrated using a graphic presentation (Visher and Visher, 1979) which indicates that a child might have to relate to four adults and up to eight grandparents. The multiple relationships demonstrate the high degree of stress involved in being a member of a remarried family. To further emphasize the difficulties encountered by remarried families we show the film "Stepparenting: New Families, Old Ties" (Polymorph Films, Inc., 1976). In this film, stepparents discuss their initial feeling of insecurity, role confusion and conflicts over child rearing practices.

Following this a short literature review is presented (Visher and Visher, 1979 and Skeen, Covi and Robinson, 1985). Issues emphasized are demographic studies, adjustment of children to remarriage, step-parent-step-child relationship and special problems of step-families.

The next component deals with myths of remarriage (Coleman and Ganong, 1985). First marriage and divorce myths are explored. To these we add the eight remarriage myths offered by Visher and Visher (1979) and Coleman and Ganong (1985).

Problem areas and expectations are explored . Brainstorming results in a list of problem areas such as children holding membership in two households, role definition and discipline. Then discussion centers on some of the expectations adults have about the new family: it will be an instantly happy family, it will make up for the misery caused by the divorce, and the stepparents will love the stepchildren immediately.

This component is followed by concerns of children in step-families. The ones mentioned most frequently are: dealing with the loss of one parent, confusion over family reorganization, anxieties, and how to get along with the step-parent (Visser & Visser, 1979; Ware, 1984). These are addressed through vignettes and discussion.

The rest of the unit is devoted to intervention strategies with stepfamilies. Interventions are either through group experiences or one-to-one counseling. With children the group approach is stressed. Group plans are developed for a) pre-school children (0-6 years) where the emphasis is on dealing with the confusion associated with the change in family structure and the means by which to cope with feelings; b) latency age children (6 -12 years) where stress is placed on problem solving skills (how to tell friends for example), helping with adjustment to new adults and assisting with practical issues such as living arrangements; and c) adolescent children (13-18 years) where the main issues are how to deal positively with both homes, how to relate to other children in the household and how to learn skills which enhance independent growth.

The major group activities for adults have to do with visitation concerns and understanding the structure of former and present families.

For visitation, a handout has been devised which includes twelve rules called "visitation do's and don'ts." For understanding the structure adults are taught to develop a program that presents in graphic form the current structure of the family.

In working with individuals many issues surface that have to be dealt with. Many remarried couples bring myths and expectations that are unrealistic. Developing effective communication skills between the newly reestablished family will help individuals cope with these myths and expectations. Some family members, children in particular, need to be allowed to mourn the loss of the natural family.

This unit is concluded by using vignettes and discussing possible ways to respond in similar situations. The film "Stepparenting" (APGA, 1976) is used for this purpose. It consists of fourteen stimulus vignettes that represent hypothetical or real situations stepparents may face.

Child Custody Laws and Mediation

In this unit the legal process of the divorce is explored. Several issues are discussed beginning with whether or not the parents agree on the divorce settlement. The factors involved in the legal divorce are delineated including residence, grounds for divorce, support of minor children, and jurisdiction of the court. The latter being of particular importance because the court retains its jurisdiction until the children involved in the custody settlement reach the age of 18.

Historically, there have been certain trends in child custody. During Roman supremacy, through the Middle Ages and feudalism, the mothers had

no rights, only duties. Women and children were possessions of the man, therefore, men received custody if a marital separation occurred (Foster & Freed, 1978; Roman & Haddad, 1978; Vail, 1979). English tradition also viewed the man as having a natural right to the children (Foster & Freed, 1978; Vail, 1979; Woody, 1978).

During the 17th and 18th centuries the status of women and children began to rise with more emphasis placed on the role of a mother (Roman & Haddad, 1978). With the work force divided by industrialization, roles became more divided with women as homemakers and the concept of "maternal instinct" was introduced (Roman & Haddad, 1978; Vail, 1979). With the prominence of motherhood in child rearing, a new trend began in custody decisions with custody being generally awarded to the mother unless she was "unfit," particularly for children of "tender years." Thus, the "tender years" doctrine of child custody was developed (Foster & Freed, 1978; Roman & Haddad, 1978; Vail, 1979; Woody, 1978). More recently the best interests of the child are being considered in awarding custody to either the mother or father or both (Foster & Freed, 1978; Vail, 1979; Woody, 1978).

Several societal events have had an impact on child custody changes. The major influences seem to be the women's movement with women wanting other than traditional female roles (Bartz & Witcher, 1978; Foster & Freed, 1978; Gersick, 1979; Jackson, 1979; Lewis, 1978; Orthner, Brown, & Ferguson, 1978; Roman & Haddad, 1978; Rosenthal & Keshet, 1981; Willison, 1979) combined with father advocacy and men's liberation groups (Foster & Freed, 1978; Lewis, 1978; Roman & Haddad, 1978; Willison, 1979).

There is a general movement toward sexual equality (Lewis, 1978), men are having a decrease in working hours and an increase in leisure time (Gersick, 1979), and more women are working than ever before (Gasser & Taylor, 1976; Gersick, 1979; Vail, 1979). Other factors that seem to be influencing custody decisions are inflation (Willison, 1979), no fault divorce legislation that has opened the way to negotiation over child custody (Bartz & Witcher, 1978; Gersick, 1979; Lewis, 1978; Orthner, Brown, & Ferguson, 1976), and public awareness through the media (Bertin, 1980; Willison, 1979). In addition, there has been support from the psychological community for awarding custody based on merit rather than the sex of the parent (Salk, 1977).

When making custody decisions the court considers several factors. These include the age and sex of the child (Foster & Freed, 1978; Vail, 1979; Woody, 1978); the child's preference for one parent over the other (Bertin, 1980; Nadeau; & Fagan & Schuntermene, 1978; P.A. 1970, No. 91; Solomon, 1977; Vail, 1979; Woody, 1977, 1978); the religion of the parents (Child Custody Act, 1970; Vail, 1979; Woody, 1978); the physical and mental fitness of the parents (Child Custody Act, 1970; Vail, 1979; Woody, 1977, 1978); the moral fitness of the parent (Child Custody Act, 1970; Vail, 1979; Woody, 1977, 1978); the death of a parent (Vail, 1979); custodial ante-nuptial contracts (Vail, 1979; Woody, 1978); the parent's relationship with and desire for the child (Foster & Freed, 1978; Child Custody Act, 1970; Vail 1979, Woody, 1977, 1979); a well established custody where the child is flourishing (Bertin, 1980; Vail, 1979; Woody, 1977); the parent's intelligence (Woody,

1977, 1978); knowledge of child development (Woody, 1977, 1978); personality and personal behavior (Woody, 1977, 1978); child rearing attitudes and child care history (Woody, 1977; 1978); geographical stability (Woody, 1977, 1978); and the needs of the child such as control and guidance (Howell, 1974; Child Custody Act, 1970). Different professionals agreed that placement with one of the natural parents and placement of siblings together were very important if those placements were possible (Child Custody Act, 1970; Woody, 1977).

Divorce mediation is an alternative to arriving at a divorce settlement is discussed. This includes the following areas: the process of mediating an agreeable settlement, factors that affect the mediation process, specific custody alternatives, and a model of intervention with steps delineated from the first session through negotiation and review (Haynes, 1981).

This section attempts to provide the participants with child custody information--it's history, present status, and practical interventions.

Conclusion

A one-semester course training counselors in divorce intervention procedures has been described. The demand for this type of service has been on the increase as evidenced by the number of convention presentations and articles published in the AACD journals. We conclude the seminar with the presentation of an integrated treatment model (Scherman, 1985) which combines treating the child and the family, utilizing resources, and dealing with perceptions and values in the community.

Since the introduction of the course as an elective, we have seen an

increase in services provided to children and adults. In 1977, we have been denied access to the elementary school children experiencing their parents' divorce because of objections school personnel and parents had. Today, almost every school in the district is offering support and skill building groups for children of divorce. Mental health settings, community agencies and religious organizations are providing services to children and adults. There is an increased perception of the existing need in this area, and an increased demand for training of support personnel, paraprofessional, and mental health workers.

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